LETTER

To an Honourable

Member of Parliament, concerning the great Growth of Popery, and the Treasonable Practices of the *Romish Bishops* and *Priests*, at this time, in *England*.

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SIR,

IN the last Conversation I had with You, You were pleas'd to tell me, You had read the late *Appeal to all Protestant Kings, Princes and States*; that You were satisfy'd of the very great Danger of the Protestant Religion abroad, and of the Cruelties and Barbarities that have been and are us'd against it in several Parts of Christendom; but that You hop'd the Protestant Religion is safe in *England*, and we have nothing to fear from Popery *here*. As to this last, I was altogether of another Mind, and think I can shew I had very great Reason so to be.

It was no Dispute betwixt us, Whether Popery be as pernicious to the Civil Rights, as the Religious Concerns of this Nation; or a Regard was had to Both These in all the Laws which the Wisdom of Parliaments hath from time to time made against Popery. We both allow'd the Necessity and the Sufficiency of those Laws, but whether all those Laws are not now asleep, will not long be a Dispute betwixt us.

To secure this Nation from the Idolatries of Popery, and the Usurpations of the Bishops of *Rome* upon the Rights of this Kingdom, it was found necessary by the Wisdom of our Parliaments, to

make very ſtrict Laws againſt Both; eſpecially when the Biſhops of *Rome* had the Impudence to iſſue out their Bulls to deprive Q. *Elizabeth* of glorious Memory, of her Crown, and to Abſolve all her Subjects from their Allegiance to Her.

(*a*) 27 *Eliz.* c. 2. ſect. 2, 3, 4. 1 *Jac.* 1. c. 4. *&c.*

By ſome of theſe Laws it is Treaſon (*a*) for any Popiſh Biſhop, Prieſt or Jeſuit, *&c.* either to come into *England*, or remain here; and Felony for any knowingly to receive or relieve them here.

But to what purpoſe are theſe Laws now? The three Popiſh Biſhops made in the late Popiſh Reign do ſtill continue here, and exerciſe their pretended Juriſdictions, as if they were in *Italy* it ſelf. They have canton'd out Kingdom into *Provinces*; and as their pretended Bp. *Leyborn* has *London*, and the Counties about it for *his* ſhare, ſo their *Bp. Gifford* has the *Weſt* and *Wales*; and their Bp. *Smith* the *Northern* Parts; where they exerciſe all the Parts of their Functions without controul. It's too well known that this laſt Summer Bp. *Gifford* went confirming thro' *Wales*; and that they boaſt of the many Hundreds He confirm'd then.

And for Prieſts and Jeſuits, do they not now ſwarm all over the Nation, eſpecially in and about *London*? And ſo much, that it cannot be deny'd, that there are more Popiſh Prieſts in *England* at this time, than were in the late Popiſh Reign it ſelf; and at the time of the *Aſſaſſination Plot*, 50 Prieſts are known to have come over in one Week.

Give me leave to ask now, whether You think there can be one Popiſh Lord or Gentleman in *England* without a popiſh prieſt in his Houſe, when it cannot be deny'd that there are at leaſt 100 Jeſuits, 150 Franciſcans, and proportionably of the Benedictines, Dominicans, Capuchins, Carmelites, and of the Seculiar Prieſts, at this time in *England*. They have their Provincials and Superiors; they keep in our Popiſh Great Man's Houſe or other their yearly Synods and Viſitations, and hold their Triennial Chapters for the chuſing thoſe Provincials, *&c.* and are in as much method *here* as even in *Rome* or *France*. And one would think from theſe their Numbers, and practices, that there are no

more

more Laws againſt them in *England*, than in *France* or *Rome*. Has not (to trouble You with no more Names at preſent), that infatmous Jeſuit *Peters* (Brother to the famous Privy-councellor) who ore our *Engliſh* Bible in his Pulpit in *Lime-ſtreet* in the late *Popiſh* Reign, continu'd in *England* ever ſince, liv'd at *Marrybone* under the Name of *Spencer*, and is at the Head of all the Jeſuits Affairs at this Day here?

By the Wiſdom of our *Parliaments*, Laws were alſo made to forbid abſolutely any *Popiſh* Worſhip in *England*; to *ſay* Maſs is the forfeiture (*b*) of 200 Marks (*b*) 23 *Eliz.* c. with one Year's Impriſonment, and to *hear* Maſs 1. ſect. 4. is the Forfeiture of 100 Marks with a Year's Impriſonment; and yet, in the deſpight of all your Laws, what Numbers of Maſs-houſes are up and down this Kingdom at this time! And what publick Reſort is there every where to 'em in *London*, in *York*, in *Winchester*, in *Durham*, not to mention more *Places* now! And what Crouds may be ſeen any Sunday-morning in *Lincoln's Inn-Fields!*

I am aſſur'd there are but few Pariſhes in *London*, wherein Maſs is not ſaid every Sunday; and I may affirm that to You, which will ſtartle You very much, There are more Maſſes ſaid in a Sunday forenoon in *London* and *Weſtminſter*, than the Church of *England*-Services in all the *Pariſh*-Churches within the Bills of Mortality, put together. And the Levying the Fines of this one Act upon the *Papiſts* for the Term of the laſt Year only, would have rais'd ſo much Money, as would not only pay off that great Debt which the ingenious Dr. *Davenant* has very judiciouſly compured the Nation to be in, but prevent your laying one Farthing of Tax upon the Nation for Seven Years to come.

Is it not, Sir, a *Præmunire* by our Laws (*c*), (*c*) 13. *Eliz.* c. 2. ſect. 7. either to bring into *England*, or to receive any *Agnus Dei's*, Beads, or ſuch Popiſh Trinkets? Is it not the Forfeiture of 40 Shillings either to ſell or buy here any one *Popiſh Pſalter*, Manual, Roſarie, or Office whatever (*d*) and yet theſe things are brought in, and (*d*) 3 *Jac.* bought and ſold aspublickly, as Toys or Books are in c. 5. f. 25 *Weſtminſter-hall* in Term-time: Sometimes in the Hall,

ſometimes in the Court, and ſometimes before the very Gates of a Certain Houſe, which was not long ſince a Franciſcan Convent. Alas! Sir, *Popery* is ſo far from being baſhful here, that it's not content barely to make nothing of your Laws, but can with *ſcorn* trample upon them. What leſs is the *Papiſts* reſorting publickly, in Crowds, as it were in *Proceſſions*? As almoſt all *Kings-ſtreet* know they did but laſt *October* 13*th.* into the Cathedral of *Weſtminſter* it ſelf; and there, in the Face of the Sun, paid their Superſtitious Devotions at the Shrine of *Edward* the Confeſſor.

That juſt Deteſtation againſt *Popery*, which the whole Nation had entertain'd, made it the Care of Parliaments to prevent any of the Subjects being perverted to that Religion. They wiſely conſider'd that there could not be a Convert made to Popery without looſing a Subject to the Government; and in *our* Days this muſt hold truer than ever, there being not one Native Papiſt, or Popiſh Convert; I dare ſay, that does not perfectly hate the preſent Government. Such Conſiderations made our *Parliaments* more than once to enact, That it ſhould be Treaſon (*e*) in any one to *turn* another, or to be *turn'd* to the Popiſh Religion here; and Miſpriſion of Treaſon for any that were Aiders or Maintainers in it. But are there ſtill, Sir, ſuch Laws in *England*, when it's the dayly Endeavour of above Thouſands in *England* to make Converts to Popery? And they can glory of the Numbers they have made. The Popiſh Biſhops and Prieſts are every-where at Liberty to make what Converts they can. There are not fewer than twenty Prieſts about one Chappel in L. I. *Fields* every Sunday, part of whole Buſineſs is to ſay the Maſſes, and another part to make Converts. Have they not carried their Converts in triumph to their Maſs at *Durham*? Do they not brag at the Siſters *Lane*'s Maſs-houſe, or rather Nunnery, in *Wincheſter*, (in the very Face of the Cathedral) of the Converts they make there? And to omit forty more Inſtances, cannot the Father *James* at *Somerſet-houſe*, and the two Iriſh Friars *Nugent* alias *Lucas*, and *Offing* alias *Fenn* at the Convent in *L. I. Fields*, glory of the Converts they have made, and are, in contempt of all

(*e*) 23 *Eliz.* c. 1. ſect. 2, 3. 1. *Jac.* 1. c. 4. ſ. 1.

your Laws daily making? *Newgate* it ſelf cannot eſcape their Diligence; and the Iriſh *Conneil* can give a good Account of his Induſtry, if not of his Succeſs *there*.

Upon the mention of theſe three *Iriſh* Prieſts, give me leave to ask what You think the *French* King would ſay to it, if my Lord *Manchester*, inſtead of One Chaplain He has with him, had entertain'd Twelve or Fourteen *French* Proteſtant Miniſters, whoſe Buſineſs ſhould have been chiefly to baptize, viſit the Sick, and give the Communion up and down *Paris*, and to make what Converts they could from Popery? There is more than one Gentleman in *England*, that knows the reaſon of ſuch a Queſtion here. And the taking up of Dr. *Wiekart* (when Chaplain with my Ld. *Portland*) by the Lieutenant *Criminal* at *Paris*, on a falſe Information, gives us an Anſwer alſo from *France*----But to return to their Triumphs *here* about their Converts, it would be unpardonable to omit the late triumphant Reception that was made for the Lord *Baltamores Son's* Lady at the Franciſcan Chappel, how it was ſtrew'd with Flowers, *&c.* for her firſt coming there. Nay, ſo buſie and ſo furious is their Zeal *now*, that a Convert from Popery goes in danger of his Life in *England*; and the late Spiriting away of the poor *Spaniſh* and *Portugueſe* Converts, tells you very plainly, what they dare do now, as well as their impudent Perſecution of Dr. *Conner* at his dying Hours, as Dr. *H.* of Sr. *Giles's* can tell you more at large.

Would You, or your Houſes of Parliament, think fit to inquire into the Number of Converts to Popery, made within this thirty or forty Years paſt, I believe it would ſtartle You far more than this Letter can. It's true, You would not find them all *here*; for That is another part of their Care, as well as of their Contempt of all your Laws, that they ſend moſt of 'em away to their Popiſh Seminaries abroad; and they dare brag, that ſcarce a Week paſſes, in which they do not ſend either a born Papiſt, or a Popiſh Convert to ſome of 'em: And the Jeſuit *Peters* alias *Spencer*, has a very conſiderable part in this Charge.

And are not theſe their Popiſh Seminaries as great an affront to your Laws as any of the reſt? What Care has not the Wiſdom of

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Parliaments taken to prevent any of our Subjects being ſent for Popiſh Education abroad! The Laws in this reſpect are ſo ſtrict and ſevere, that any one that reads them would conclude, that the greateſt *Papiſt* in *England* durſt not ſend a Child abroad to be ſo educated? much more that no Man durſt either make Converts to *Popery*, or ſend any of 'em to their Popiſh Seminaries.

But for all this, they ſend 'em conſtantly abroad, both Sons and Daughters, both Papiſts born, and Popiſh Converts; and are breeding them up there for the continual Diſturbance of our Nation; and make of their Converts the very worſt Fire-brands of all; as the Jeſuit *Parſons* did prove, and I fear the late *Madman* Convert will. Nor have they ſuch Popiſh Seminaries only *abroad*, this would be too ſmall a Contempt of You and your Laws, if they did not keep up ſome here under our own Noſes. They have their *Popiſh Schools* in *London*, and too many other places; they have their *Nunneries*, at *York* for inſtance, and at *Hamerſmith*; and the latter *Nuns*, live in hopes of better Accommodations at a Noble Houſe not far from them, which I think is called *Sion*-Houſe, and they ſay belongs to the Nuns of St. *Brigit*.

I was not willing to trouble You with too long a Letter, eſpecially in Parliament-time, or I ſhould have inſtanc'd in more matters, and particularly about thoſe good Men the Jeſuits, whoſe Eſtate in *England* is not computed at leſs than 30000 *l. per Ann.* And would You not think it ſtrange, if theſe Jeſuits, by their Agent *B.* ſhould be at this very time the Farmers of the Markets of the City of *London* it ſelf, and cruelly exacting upon the poor People there?

This is the State of Popery now in *England*, and theſe are their practices: And now, Sir, I will again ask You, is there no Danger of the Proteſtant Religion *here*? Is there no Fear of Popery in *England*, when it is making ſo great a progreſs among us? When the Popiſh Prieſts now ſwarm throughout the Kingdom; When their Maſſes are publick almoſt every-where, and frequented as openly as if *theirs* was, and not *ours*, the Eſtabliſht Religion of the Country? When they compaſs every part and place of *England* to make their Converts, and glory ſo much in their Numbers

of

of them, and ſend 'em to their Popiſh Seminaries and Convents abroad.

What could they do *more*, if theirs was the Eſtabliſht Religion of the Nation; as they hope e're long to ſee it, and declare they do not fear Accompliſhing their great Deſign in the Way they are now in. In a little time they hope to take poſſeſſion again of all their Rights, as they call 'em; of the Eſtates of our Nobility and Gentry that are upon Abby-Lands; and of the Cathedrals and Churches of our Clergy. Their Bp. *Leyborn* lyes ready in *Queens-ſtreet* to take poſſeſſion of *Lambeth-houſe*; and their Bp. *Smith* is ready for that of *York*; where his Silver Croſier was in the late Reign prepared for him; and Bp. *Gifford* is ready to plant at *Litchfield* or *Worceſter*; for He will not go nearer *Bath* for old *Luellin*'s ſake, who is there already.

What is the Reaſon I pray, Sir, when theſe things are really ſo, of the general Silence in *England* about Popery? Have we forgot all their Plots and Conſpiracies, and even the laſt *Aſſaſſination* One? Have we forgot their practices in the late Reign, and how near the Deſtruction of the Proteſtant Religion, and of all our Rights and Liberties was *then*? and how inevitable this was, without that miraculous Deliverance which we received by his preſent Majeſty? Whom God long preſerve. What is the meaning of the unaccountable Inſenſibility we are now under? Were we all miſtaken *then*: And is popery, which then, and ever till now; was ſo idolatrous, and ſuperſtitious, and cruel, and tyranical and intolerable, become a holy, innocent, harmleſs, inoffenſive Perſuaſion at laſt? No, no, Sir, Popery is Popery *ſtill*, Our conſtant implacable Enemy; and, if We will not take care of our ſelves, it will take care of us, in ſuch a way, as will make all our Hearts to bleed; in a Way that will be the Ruin of all our Laws, of all our Rights and Eſtates, as well as of our Holy Religion; and when This is gone, lett he other go for *me*.

Where is your Love to your Religion, your Country, your Laws and your Poperty, if you can tamely look on, and ſuffer all theſe Affronts from *Popery* to Every One of Them? from You in Parliament We muſt expect Redreſs in this imminent Danger;

and

and if You will not help us in *such* a terrible Circumstance, I am sure You will acknowledge, that you can never answer this careless Uncontern to God, or your own Consciences, or to your Country; And especially since you have the greatest Encouragement imaginable to do your utmost for the putting an Effectual Stop to the Growth of Popery, when you consider *Who* now sits on the Throne, *viz.* not only a *Protestant*, but a King to whom, under God, we owe our preservation from Popery; and who hath signalized His Zeal and Courage for the Protestant Religion and *Interest*, incomparably beyond any King, or Prince in Christendom.

You cannot expect, or be pleased with, any Apology for the Freedom of this Letter from,

S I R,

London,
Jan. 15[illegible]. *Your most Affectionate, Humble Servant,* R. W.

ADVERTISEMENT.

AN Appeal to all Protestant Kings, Princes and States, concerning the apparent Danger of the Protestant Religion; and the great Decay of its Interest in Europe. *With a most Awakening Account of the Unjust and Cruel Methods for the Destruction thereof, that are practised in several Countries.*

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